

Protect children on the move



**Research Report:**  
**Children and Adolescents on the Move Involved**  
**in Street Work in Albania and Kosovo:**  
**Transnational and Internal Patterns**



Title: Children and Adolescents on the Move Involved in Street Work in Albania and Kosovo: Transnational and Internal Patterns

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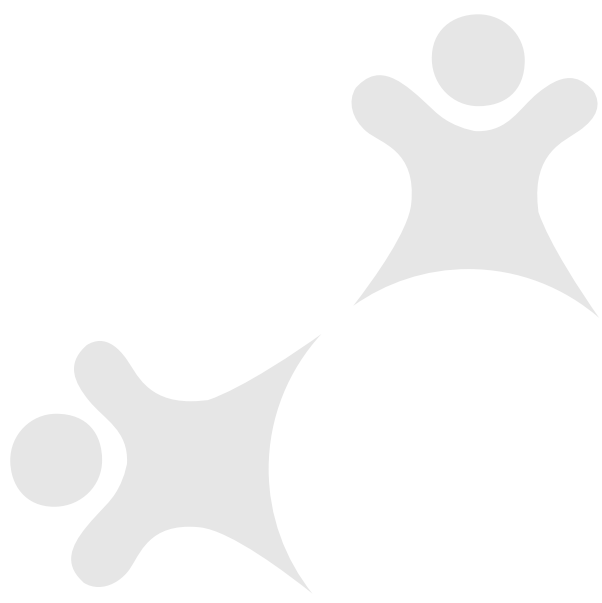
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# **RESEARCH REPORT**

## **CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS ON THE MOVE INVOLVED IN STREET WORK IN ALBANIA AND KOSOVO: TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERNAL PATTERNS**

Zana Vathi





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Key concepts and debates</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3. Researching children on the move</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1. Research aims and sampling	13
3.2. Methods and participant groups	13
3.3. Ethics and research procedures	16
<b>4. Movements across and within borders</b>	<b>19</b>
4.1. Patterns of movements	19
4.2. Settlement in Kosovo	20
4.3. Transnational ties and movements	21
4.4. Internal movements	22
<b>5. Regimes of street work</b>	<b>25</b>
5.1. Time dimensions	25
5.2. Key patterns of urban street work	26
5.3. Hierarchies among street workers	30
5.4. Management of earnings	31
<b>6. Vulnerabilities and resiliencies</b>	<b>33</b>
6.1. Uncertainty and poverty	33
6.2. Schooling	34
6.3. (Un)safety related to work on the street	35
6.4. Health	37
6.5. Secrecy, astuteness and skills	38
6.6. Socialisation, leisure and social support	39
6.7. Social support	41
<b>7. Services</b>	<b>43</b>
7.1. Awareness of stakeholders and the functioning of services	43
7.2. Access to and experience with services	45
<b>8. Conclusions and Policy recommendations</b>	<b>49</b>
8.1. Legal framework and policy making	49
8.2. Services and children's needs	50
8.3. Researching and regulating migration	52
<b>References</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Tables</b>	
Table 1. Research participants	16
Table 2. Street work activities carried out by children and adolescents	27
<b>Boxes</b>	
Box 1. Profiles of street workers: caretakers	23
Box 2. Profiles of street workers: children	31
<b>Photos</b>	
1. Fieldwork notebooks	14
2. Friday holy day and street work	26
3. Peer group and street work	28
4. Begging (in) the heart of the city	29
5. Cross-roads of street work	36
6. Outcomes of scavenging	38
7. Play in the context of street work	40

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report looks at the intersections of child migration, street children and child labour with the aim of identifying issues and possibilities of improving the protection of children who experience migration and mobility – both transnationally and internally – in Albania and Kosovo. The research presented here aims at further expanding the knowledge on the ‘categories’ of child migration, street children and child labour as part of a major initiative – the Mario project ‘Protect Children on the Move’ [<http://marioproject.org>]. The main objectives of the umbrella research are:

- To identify emerging Central and South East European (C/SEE) children’s migration patterns.
- To offer an in-depth understanding of the vulnerability factors that affect C/SEE migrant children during their migration path and once they have settled in.
- To analyze the adequacy and effectiveness of government responses to the protection needs of C/SEE migrant children.
- To support Mario partners’ advocacy efforts with evidence-based recommendations on the improvement of the transnational protection of C/SEE migrant children

For the purposes of the Mario project, a ‘child on the move’ shall be understood as including the following categories of children:

- Migrant children (internal or across borders; legal or illegal; accompanied or not)
- Asylum seeking and refugee children
- Trafficked children
- Internally displaced children or children outside a protective environment.

Therefore, the child should already have moved, may also be a returned migrant, is moving or/and is susceptible to impending migration. The child should possess the citizenship or habitual residence in one of the Central and South Eastern European countries. Migration may be either internal or international.

Albania and Kosovo, as the rest of the Western Balkans region, have experienced major transformations in the past few decades. The World Bank (2014) reports that Albania has made significant economic progress since the beginning of the 1990s when the communist regime collapsed. In early 2000s the level of poverty was recorded at 25 per cent – a figure that decreased significantly in 2008, dropping to 12 per cent. Nonetheless, all economic indicators seem to have been negatively affected by the international financial crisis. In Albania such effects were more apparent after 2008 – a year that is meaningful for the findings of this report since many children and caretakers reported that they had moved to Kosovo for the first time 6–7 years ago. In 2008, poverty increased to 14.3 per cent, whereas unemployment increased from 12.5 per cent recorded in 2008 to 16.9 per cent in 2013. Several World Bank projects have been targeting the social protection system, aiming at the improvement of access by vulnerable groups and the improvement of social safety nets, including a social assistance and disability reform. Child protection system, on the other hand, is still fragmentary, taking a case-based and group-based approach and lacking in prevention measures (Danaj 2011).



Inequality, discrimination and marginalisation are not unknown phenomena in Albania. Often found at the bottom of social hierarchies, the socio-economic indicators for minorities of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) origin testify to such phenomena. These groups are particularly relevant to this report, since the vast majority of children and caretakers that migrated – from Albania to Kosovo and/or within each of these countries – and engaged in street work identified as RAE. According to UNDP (2006) the number of Roma in Albania can vary between 30,000 to 150,000. The situation of Roma changed for the worse with the collapse of communism particularly in terms of accommodation and discrimination (ERRC 1997). As a result, Roma in Albania are reported to live in conditions of extreme poverty and fare much worse than non-Roma population across various socio-economic indicators in all Western Balkans countries (ECRI 2010; UNDP 2005). For example, Roma population fared significantly worse than non-Roma populations in terms of poverty, unemployment, and school enrolment, with the most striking differences recorded in terms of illiteracy (UNDP 2005).

Emigration has been an important phenomenon in the past few decades in Albania and Kosovo following the radical changes that Albania and other Balkan states went through. Indeed, since the beginning of the 1990s the Western Balkan countries have had some of the highest emigration rates in the world. For example, in 2005 the Government of Albania reported that 25 per cent of Albania's population had emigrated towards different European countries. Similarly, Kosovo has experienced different kinds of migration, affected by the combination of economic marginalisation and backwardness, ethnic discrimination, political unrest and war. Currently, Kosovo is one of the countries with the highest rate of emigration, with 20 percent of the population living abroad (Haxhikadrija 2009). The levels of poverty are particularly high among children, women and certain ethnic groups such as the RAE communities (UNDP 2012).

Nonetheless, differently from out-migration, other patterns of migration within the Western Balkans remain underexplored. This is particularly the case of child migration patterns in the region – a trend that concurs with a lack of focus on children in the context of migration internationally (Dobson 2009).

Previous research conducted at national and local level in Albania and Kosovo has identified the need to consider the multiplicity of the life conditions of children on the move and an acute need to improve the protection system and access to services for these children. An interesting observation in these regards is the need to differentiate between different categories of children on the move for service purposes, although there is a significant overlap between several categories. Another important aspect of working with children on the move is the need to identify risks and not to overlook opportunities that movement may create for the children (Avdiu 2014; Danaj 2011; Jahsini and Tahsini 2012).

Child migration and mobility across the C/SEE and the Western Balkans is not an unknown phenomenon to organizations working with children (Cazenave 2012; Invernizzi 2011). According to statistics of Terre des Hommes in Kosovo, in the years 2007–10 an approximate number of 200 children from Albania were identified to be begging in Kosovo (as cited by Voko and Tahsini 2014). Yet, while the phenomenon of children on the move has concerned different organizations working with children, the same thing could not be said about the importance of children on the move in terms of policy-making in C/SEE and the Western Balkans (Avdiu 2014; Danaj 2011).



The findings deriving from desk research and fieldwork for this project are presented in the coming sections, starting with migration patterns. The primary goal of transnational migration and other movements within the borders documented in this report was finding employment and the improvement of participants' economic situation. An important place in this research, therefore, is dedicated to the analysis of patterns of urban street work, which consists of an important aspect the Mario Project focuses on. Economic activities on the street consisted of a crucial livelihood strategy for participants of this study. The regimes of street work analysed in this report appear to have important time dimensions, which had important implications for the patterns of migration across the borders and also internal movements. Differences were found to exist among children and adolescents and between minor and adult street workers.

Care is also shown that alongside vulnerabilities of children on the move, research does not overlook their resilience and coping strategies. In this research, children and adolescents appeared as vulnerable because of poverty, uncertainty and poor living and working conditions that posed threats to their health and wellbeing. At the same time, children and caretakers appeared as active agents in countering the negative effects of their living and working conditions. While the report is careful not to trivialise the challenges that caretakers and children face, instances of networking, socialisation and leisure, and social support are analysed here, so as to do justice to these participants' resiliencies.

In the penultimate section, the report attempts an analysis of systemic features in terms of child protection and other services for children on the move in Kosovo. The section combines information deriving from interviews with stakeholders with an analysis of the narratives of children, caretakers and key community members. The features of child services uncovered through these narratives show that there exist a certain hierarchy of categories of children that require protection and legal provisions – a hierarchy that is compatible with the definition of children on the move as understood by policy makers and service providers. The findings of this report show that the policy framework is focused on unaccompanied minors and exploitation, and identifies child refugees and those that have experienced trafficking as top categories, reflecting also international discourses on children on the move and academic discourses on the topic.

The report concludes with policy recommendations, which aim to enhance advocacy in the region on issues of children on the move. These recommendations are directed towards policy makers, service providers and academics working on children on the move. For the very nature of movements across the borders and the fact that social and legal protection are, to a large extent, nationally contained, this report suggests that it is important to enhance transnational cooperation and encourage bilateral agreements between countries in the region. In turn, work at a national level could focus on preventing marginalisation by analysing the source of vulnerability for certain groups and individuals, by taking a transformative approach to social protection systems and measures (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003). Specific measures could focus on relieving the effects of long-standing discrimination towards certain groups that are prominent among children and adults on the move that engage in street work such as the RAE communities.



## 2. KEY CONCEPTS AND DEBATES

### *Child migrants*

The experience of children in the context of migration has only recently come to the focus of attention of researchers and policy makers (Dobson 2009), despite children having always been part of human migration and consisting of a high number of migrants worldwide (UN 2013). A pioneering publication on child migration, the report by Whitehead and Hashim (2005) uncovered several inconsistencies and gaps in the way children were considered in migration research and policy-making. This report showed that often children do not appear separately from adults in migration statistics and reliable national data on child migration were exceedingly rare. There was a disparity in the way categories were used in different way in different countries and statistics and a lack of consensus regarding terms and their operationalization. Most importantly, the lack of clear data complicated assessment of impact of migration on children's health, as the effects on children are inferred from studies of households as a whole. Issues with data and definitions are of particular relevance to the context and groups researched as part of the current report, not least because lack of statistics appears to be a general weakness in Kosovo because of its *sui generis* status and the challenges of post-conflict administration (UNDP 2012).

Whitehead and Hashim (2005) grouped children involved in migration into three groups: children who migrate autonomously, children who migrate with their families, and children who are left behind. Among these three categories, the first category of the unaccompanied minors has received most of the attention of policy-makers, overshadowing the issues that children who migrate with their families or those whose parents migrate, face. Unaccompanied minors were part of a broader discourse on security and migration, and were identified as a source of anxiety for the receiving societies (Dobson 2009). Otherwise, children in the context of migration were typically seen as the 'luggage' of adults (Orellana et al 2001). Studies that look at children's vulnerabilities, agency and resilience in the context of family migration are emerging only recently (e.g. Ni Laoire et al 2010; Vathi and Duci 2014).

### *Street children*

Challenging the expectation of societies towards children and their conduct, street children have been often stigmatised and have been the target of programmes that aim restoration of the 'public good' (Berezina 2003). The general attitude towards street children is captured by Stephens (1995: 12):

'Notions of street children as non- or anti-social beings, presumably without families or values of their own, have been used to legitimise radical programs to eliminate the menace of street children in their interests of the general public good. [...] Street children are a prime focus of fear and demands for more severe social controls in virtually every major urban centre around the world.'

The general definition of street children employed by practitioners is the UNICEF definition, which groups children into three groups: street living children, street working children,

and children from street families. Whitehead and Hashim (2005) observed that such children could also be grouped in terms of their migration status. Among street children, some may have experienced international or internal migration and, therefore, may be homeless children. Other children, such as market children, could consist of local children who live with their families and do not qualify as child migrants.

The discourse on children and home links with societal expectations towards children to live their life in home and family environment (Glauser 1990). Tendencies to move away from home or the protected environment would challenge the predominant ideas on childhood as characterised by fixity and immobility and children as vulnerable, innocent and lacking agency and resilience (James et al 1998).

### *Child labour*

Child labour is generally understood as child work that entails harm and exploitation of the children. As a result, child labour is widely condemned in the Western world, although child labour in non-hazardous conditions in developing countries is increasingly seen as tolerable. According to the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Article 32:

'States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international instruments, States Parties shall in particular:

- Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;
- Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;
- Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.'

As a result of states' commitments and the activities of various organizations, globally, child labour continues to decline; nonetheless, there are still 215 million children caught in child labour worldwide. According to ILO (2010) trends of child labour in 2004–8 show that the number of children in hazardous work is declining, particularly among those below 15 years of age. However, there are still 115 million children in hazardous work. Among girls there is a significant decrease whereas among boys and older children (age 15 to 17), the trends show some increase. Most child labourers continue to work in agriculture and only one in five working children is in paid employment.

Increasingly, child labour is seen as a multifaceted issue, having both disadvantages and advantages for children and their families (Mackinnon 2003). Concerns on disadvantages of child labour see children's work as unnatural, interfering with children's development, and as having the potential to be dangerous or damaging for children. Child labour is often blamed for interfering with children's schooling. It has also been recognised that working children may be treated harshly or unfairly. Yet, the advantages of child work are seen in the context of economic and political issues that characterise developing parts of the world. In these contexts, paid work gives an income and contributes to the family economy, while work gives meaning to life and it can be enjoyable, enabling children to learn and acquire skills.

### *Child trafficking*

The regulation of child trafficking is part of an elaborate framework on human trafficking. The main international legal documents include The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children - General Assembly resolution 55/25 (entry into force 25 December 2003) and the UNCRC (1989). According to the protocol, Article 3, paragraph (a), human trafficking is:

'... the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.'

The UNCRC (1989) has dedicated two articles to the trafficking and sexual abuse of children. According to Article 34, paragraph (a):

'States parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- (a) the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- (b) the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
- (c) the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

While Article 34 focuses on protection, putting an emphasis on coercion and exploitation, the UNCRC also predicts prevention. According to Article 35:

'States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form'.

The regulation of child trafficking is particularly enforced by these legal documents. As it can be seen in paragraph (a) cited above, in the case of adults, trafficking should involve 'threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person' (UN 2003). However, in the case of the children, Article 3 paragraph (c) predicts that:

'The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article.'

### *Beyond vulnerability and protection*

A major debate in the field of critical childhood studies has been the need to recognize children's agency and resilience alongside their vulnerability (James et al 1998; Nì Laoire et al 2010). This is particularly important in the case of 'unusual categories' of children such as child migrants, street children, working children and the trafficked children. For

example, Nieuwenhuys (1996: 246) maintains that the problematisation of child labour has an ideological basis, which excludes children from the production of value and most kinds of economic activities. This attitude towards children's work has been at the basis of the modernity project in the West and shows little regard towards contextual issues in other parts of the world and children's agency.

In particular, child trafficking is considered a severe form of child abuse. At societal levels O'Connell Davidson (2005) argues that there exists a hierarchical understanding of child abuse and exploitation, and trafficking and sexual abuse are considered the worst. Often other cases of child rights violations such as poverty, hunger, diseases and lack of health care are ignored in face of sexual abuse. There exists, thus, a detachment of sexual abuse from other violations due to its symbolic meaning.

The Western bias in the definition of 'good childhood' and the implications this has in the way societies and policy-makers view the issue of children who do not comply with this definition is summarised by Wyness (2009: 114):

'... from a Western or developed vantage point there is still the sense that the outcomes of global poverty, the street child and child labourer, are thought to be "out of place"... Whether we are talking about the "disordered child", the "street child" or even the "precocious child" the need to attach an adjective to the "child" connoted a problem. Thus "normal children", these located within the perimeters of home, school and playground, are simply known as "children".'

Most importantly, it should be considered that a significant overlap exists between 'unusual categories' of children and between child migrants who are involved in cross-border and internal movements. Research on migration is calling for a move beyond dichotomous thinking and divisions such as 'forced' or 'voluntary' migration (Van Hear 1998); 'regular' or 'irregular' migration (Vathi and King 2013). Migrants' experiences and, as a result, their vulnerabilities, needs and resiliencies should be seen in a continuum.

Interventions are also expected to consider the context and the broader picture and tackle much broader issues such as underdevelopment, inequality and poverty, which give rise to vulnerability and exploitation. Policy makers are also cautioned to anticipate negative consequences of banning child labour and street children (Mackinnon 2003). Research has shown that by banning child labour, children lose important sources of income for them and their families. 'Saving' children from harm of labour has also meant putting them on the street in other contexts, whilst strict rules for children on the street have taken children to institutions. Often, restrictive measures have given rise to 'downward spiral': children taken from the street moving back to the streets as victims of drugs, crime and sexual exploitation.

## 3. RESEARCHING CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

### 3.1. Research aims and sampling

When approaching children on the move and their caretakers, this research followed the principles set out in the MARIO project methodological section (Milne 2013). At the same time, it took an exploratory approach in order to identify the complexity of patterns of children's movement, their life and work on the street, their interaction with adult caretakers and their access to various services in different localities of their mobile livelihoods.

The definition of 'children on the move' employed by the MARIO Project for the purpose of research in South-Eastern Europe includes migration – referring to both international and internal migration – and it attempted to include children who were not living in a protective environment (be it family or institutional) which triggered movement. This definition determined our sampling, which included children who move within the same city, alongside internal and international migrants (those moving within Kosovo and those moving from Albania).

As explained in section 2., children that get engaged in street activities can be migrants – international or internal; other children can be mobile in the urban areas where they work, but live with their families (Whitehead and Hashim 2005). Sampling was also imposed by the logistics of our research. We approached caretakers and children who were working on the street without any prejudice in terms of their origin, therefore once we established contact we decided to go ahead with the interview so as to respect the availability of the caretakers and children.

From a methodological point of view, we involved children who had not migrated from Albania so as to have a comparative dimension in our data. This approach can also qualify as 'bracketing' (Boyatzis 1998) and it is considered beneficial as it enhances the understanding of data resulting from research with the target sample.

### 3.2. Methods and participant groups

Participatory research approaches were employed and all attempts were made that research and the research team employed child-friendly approaches. For example, notebooks used by the research team were purposefully chosen to be child-friendly (Photo 1). Following Christensen (2004: 165) children in this research were considered as 'fellow human beings'; therefore, they were treated equally in terms of informed consent, but also in terms of their opinion during and after the interview process.





*Photo 1. Fieldwork notebooks (source: author)*

The Mario Methodological Guideline (Milne 2013) suggests four research methods to be applied in the context of fieldwork with children on the move:

- 1) desk research
- 2) semi-structured interviews with children, adult caretakers and stakeholders
- 3) open group discussions with stakeholders and children, and
- 4) observation and snapshot interviews with key community members.

A team of researchers<sup>1</sup> worked to interpret and further operationalize the methodological principles outlined above and the concept of children on the move. Consideration was shown towards children's living and working conditions and their vulnerabilities. To account for potential lack of time and trust from the side of the children and caretakers, the research team decided to create observation guidelines and snapshot interview guidelines as well as semi-structured interview schedules, which were subsequently adapted to the particular context of fieldwork.

In addition, a research diary was administered by the author of this report, in which details and observations deriving from fieldwork were recorded on a daily basis. To ensure that rich qualitative material was collected, photographs were taken when possible. Some of these photographs are included in the research finding sections in this report.

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<sup>1</sup> Claire Milligan, Tamo Wagener, Zana Vathi

### *Children*

In total, 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted; 17 of which were conducted in Pristina and 4 others with street children in Peja. Among these children, 12 were from Albania, originating from Tirana, the capital of Albania, and other urban areas such as Durrës, Fier, Laç and Korçë, and the rest were from Kosovo. The latter consisted of children from Fushë Kosovo, from Peja and from villages in the proximity of Peja. The children interviewed were from 9 up to 17 years old. The majority of children interviewed were of RAE origin.

### *Adult caretakers*

Eight semi-structured interviews with parents or caretakers of children on the move were conducted. Their age varied from 30 to 48 years old; the majority (7) were of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) origin. They came from the capital - and other cities in Albania, such as Durrës, Fier, Laç and Korçë. Caretakers included parents of the children, aunties and other relatives, and also close friends of the parents who had taken children to work in Kosovo. However, it is difficult to talk about origin in the case of participants originating from Albania since some of them had been on the move before moving to Kosovo. The origin reported above refers to the last location in Albania prior to moving to Kosovo.

### *Snapshot interviews with key community members*

Five interviews with key community members were conducted. These included a kiosk owner, a policeman, owner of a shop in the city centre, an ambulant seller of ice creams and candies, and a client in the city centre market area in Peja. These interviews generated information on the features of street children although the information deriving from key community people was very place-specific. For example, key community members interviewed near the traffic lights said that most of street children were male and teenagers. Those on the square said that children varied in age between 5 to 16 years old and mostly beg. Other information deriving from these interviews were the attitude of the citizens towards these children. They also offered information on the public discourse on street children in the respective cities where this research took place.

### *Stakeholders*

Interviews with stakeholders were conceptualised to include policy makers and service providers. The sample included social workers, journalists, civil servants in ministries, and governmental institutions that deal with trafficking. Other participants were representatives of civil society organizations and international organizations. A total of 14 interviews were conducted, mostly with stakeholders in Pristina, either face-to-face or via e-mail.

A summary of the interviews conducted in Kosovo is presented in Table 1. It should be noted that the number of people the research team interacted with is far higher. For example, in one day the researchers interacted with about 19 people in different parts of Pristina. Notes were taken on snap shot interviews and observations were recorded in the research diary. A similar pattern was evident in Peja. Groups of street workers stayed together in specific parts of city that we visited such as the main park, the bazaar near the mosque, the city centre and the central city market. Groups of children and caretakers observed in Peja could be as big as comprising 11 street workers.

City	Children		Caretakers		Key community		Stakeholders		Total (location)
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Pristina	12	5	1	4	4	0	8	6	40
Peja	1	3	0	3	2	0	0	0	9
Total (participants)	13	8	1	7	6	0	8	6	M:28 F:21
	21		8		6		14		Total: 49

Table 1. Research participants

### 3.3. Ethics and research procedures

Research for this project observed ethical requirements on research with vulnerable groups and particular ethical requirements for working with children. Prior to fieldwork, all members of research team agreed to and signed the Terre des Hommes child protection policy. In particular, principles of anonymity and confidentiality were observed at all times. In order to respect anonymity caretakers and children were given a code, which was formed in the beginning of each interview. Participants were asked to choose a favourite number, colour and celebrity which would then consist of their code; for example, 5/red/Meda. This method was seen as enabling the creation of a friendly climate at the beginning of the interview, which in turn generated interesting research findings discussed in the coming sections. The taking of pictures was based on the principle that caretakers and children were photographed as part of the urban landscape, while the publication of visual material aims to add to the ethnographic material presented in this report and expose as little as possible individual children. Taking into account the precarity of these participants' lives, no audio recordings were made and notes were taken for all interviews.

Fieldwork was conducted in two main cities in Kosovo – Pristina and Peja –following the mapping results of the Terre des Hommes offices in Pristina which showed that these cities host the highest number of street children and caretakers. The research team observed and participated in discussions with people in urban spaces which children and caretakers mostly inhabit, such as city squares, traffic lights, market areas, etc.

Differences between the two cities emerged both in terms of the composition of the population of street workers and the attitude of participants towards taking part in research. Street children and adult caretakers and street workers in Peja are mostly from Kosovo, as compared to Pristina where we met many more street children and caretakers coming from Albania. The children and caretakers in Peja are also more sceptic about being interviewed. Key community members were not always readily accessible; for example, we approached a *frizer* (barber) in Peja near the mosque who wished not to pronounce his opinion on street workers.

The course and the outcomes of fieldwork were also affected by the specific time of the year and religious events in Kosovo. The beginning of July 2014 coincided with Ramadan which is the holy month for Muslims during which believers are expected to fast. As a result, ethnographic efforts for this project were affected by this important dimension of Kosovo's life. Ramadan and fasting affected the time that children and caretakers came out in the city centre to work, but also their working patterns in specific days of the week. For example, when we approached two women sitting in the proximity of city's main square at 5.30pm, they said that they could not talk to us because it was Ramadan and they were unable to speak since they were afraid of saying words that could

break their fasting etc. Similarly, our attempts to meet children and caretakers in the city centre and organize a party on a Friday afternoon failed since most of them were located around mosques where Pristina's believers went to pray. For a more detailed discussion of time dimensions of this research and implications for street work see section 5.1.

One of the main limitations of this research is the short duration of fieldwork, which took place in the beginning of July 2014 and lasted 5 days. Data deriving from this research should, therefore, be treated with caution. We were unable to uncover dynamics of sex work and trafficking and, in general, children and caretakers were very cautious when talking to us. Such sensitive topics require a more lengthy fieldwork so as to ensure that trust is gained and a rapport is created between the researcher and the participants. Nonetheless, we noticed discrepancy between the information given in different stages of interviews and on various questions.



## 4. MOVEMENTS ACROSS AND WITHIN BORDERS

### 4.1. Patterns of movements

The migration and mobility patterns that characterise movements of children and caretakers interviewed comprise both *transnational* movements between Albania and Kosovo, with some participants reporting about experiences also in other countries, and *internal* movements in Albania and Kosovo. This pattern became evident because of the sampling of both Albanian-origin and Kosovan-origin participants, but also because the participants who had moved from Albania to Kosovo engage in both transnational and internal movements. One of the participants that lived in Kosovo reported that his family came from Ulcinj in Montenegro, whilst stakeholders in Macedonia have indicated that families with children originating from Kosovo work on the street in Skopje. Although this research did not investigate such movements in depth, these cases are indicative of other patterns of transnational movements in the Western Balkans.

Logistically speaking, bus was the main means of travelling – both for cross-border and internal movements; other means of transport such as train and taxi were mentioned in only a small number of cases. Caretakers pointed to the relatively cheap ticket for a bus trip from Albania to Pristina (€15 one-way ticket) and the proximity between the two cities as factors that made bus the most suitable means of transport. Infrastructural developments between the two countries such as the new highway built between the Tirana and Pristina, have sped up and intensified the movements between Albania and Kosovo. In turn, agreements between the governments of Albania and Kosovo on a free movement area enable the travel of these groups across the borders without the need of a visa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012).

These movements take place both in groups and individually for both children and caretakers. Movements in groups can be organized in the form of families moving together, but often groups include kin and relatives, and also close friends. Families moving across the borders and cities may consist of nuclear families, but sometimes they consist of single-parent families headed by mothers. Often a mixture of different generations and relations are characteristic of these mobile groups. For example, one caretaker said that she travels from Durrës to Pristina with her family, including her in-laws, the whole group consisting of fifteen people. This reflects also on their presence in the urban areas; in one of the groups that inhabit the ‘Mother Tereza’ square in Pristina we noticed a mother with a toddler, two other children of 5 and 7 years old, and a teenage daughter, in the company of the mother’s sister and the disabled adult brother.

Yet, among our participants there were caretakers who said their family was divided across the border. Some parents had left their children behind, other caretakers mentioned that their main concern was their parents who could not make it to Kosovo because of their ill health. Among caretakers there was also a single woman who identified as Roma who had ‘borrowed’ her sister’s daughter so that they begged together in Kosovo.



### 4.2. Settlement in Kosovo

Cross-border movements can lead to short-term stays, seasonal migration or more permanent settlement in Kosovo. Some participants reported that they had first arrived in Kosovo 7 years ago, others were much more recent, having moved to Kosovo a few weeks before this research took place. Some families and children move only for a number of weeks in the summer; this year, the summer was conducive to more productive street work, particularly begging, because it coincided with the holy month of Ramadan. Other children and caretakers report that they spend the entire spring and summer seasons in Kosovo.

There were among our participants some caretakers and children who are settled in Kosovo on a more long-term basis. Indeed, this seems to be the aspiration of many caretakers and children, but this is hampered by structural difficulties they encounter in Kosovo. Some children report that they have spent more of their years in Kosovo than in Albania. Indicative of the long-term patterns of settlement are the two main areas in Pristina in which these children and caretakers live: City Park and Xhamia a Llapit (Llapi's Mosque).

Most of the families and children interviewed said that they moved to Kosovo because of poverty. When asked why they had to leave Albania for Kosovo they said that Albania is poorer and none gives them money. Participants' narratives may be affected by the favourable local situation in Pristina, seasonal patterns of migration, and a harsher discrimination they may experience in Albania; otherwise, according to UNDP (2012) data on development in Albania and Kosovo show that Kosovo has comparable, yet lower results across development indicators. For example, the Human Development Indicator in Albania is 0.739 and 0.713 in Kosovo. Gross National Income indicators follow a similar pattern: 7803 in Albania and 7410 in Kosovo.

Interestingly, although most participants liked Pristina and had been going there or staying there for a long time, they said that they belonged to Albania. As one of the young participants put it, 'there is no place like your own country!' (2/red/noisy, female, 13). Other participants were careful to point out that they belonged to their towns of origin in Albania where their family home is.

Reactions about the outcomes of migration differ across the groups and among caretakers and children. Some caretakers appreciated the better living conditions in Kosovo in comparison to Albania. In line with previous research that has identified a link between city's aesthetics and migrants' belongingness (Vathi 2012), they also made reference to the beauty of Pristina as a city, which enhanced their positive feelings in relation to their move to Kosovo. Other participants were appreciative of the possibility to survive in Kosovo and less poverty than in Albania. One of the young participants 5/yellow/sportsman (male, 14) was positive about his family's move to Kosovo since they are able 'to secure some bread'.

Difficulties of settlement and issues with accessing the health system and finding appropriate accommodation were some of the issues that made participants regret their decision to migrate. As one caretaker put it, 'I came here for a better life, but it turned out to be a catastrophe' (5/pink/my family, female, 30). Yet, these movements and particularly settlement patterns are very fluid. Therefore, framing the 'outcomes' of migration is difficult – both for participants to articulate them and as an interpretation of their narratives.



### 4.3. Transnational ties and movements

Many of the participants originating from Albania were engaged in transnational movements, which take the form of temporary migration – seasonal migration, or return visits to Albania. One adult caretaker commented that most of people (referring to the RAE community in Albania) have moved to Kosovo, so the presence of these children and families is high, which reflects also on the intensity of their transnational movements.

Similarly to the findings of previous research on return visits to the homeland in the context of migration from Albania (Vathi and King 2011), the reasons for such trips to Albania are varied; some participants put the emphasis on the need to visit the family, whereas younger participants mentioned the need to visit friends. Nonetheless, for those participants who had been in Kosovo for a long period of time, movements back and forth were for less emotional reasons. One caretaker mentioned that she had to travel to Albania to look after her house there – a flat she has had since the communist regime. In other cases, transnational return visits were considered as time off work and leisure time spent with relatives in the big cities in Albania, such as Tirana and Durrës.

The frequency of these transnational visits varied widely across the participants. Some participants reported that they went to Albania only once a year; typically those who were settled more permanently travelled less back and forth, whereas those families and children who lived their lives across the borders in a seasonal fashion said that they travelled every few weeks. Invariably, transnational movements are hampered by poverty and lack of financial resources. One caretaker said that she had been 6 years in Kosovo but had been only once in Albania to visit her relatives because she could not afford these trips to Albania.

Transnational ties are also maintained via information and communication technologies (ICTs). Telephone appeared as the main means of communicating for caretakers whereas some children said that they use internet to communicate with their friends and their relatives. However, these kinds of ties are not always possible due to poverty and lack of computer literacy. As one caretaker put it:

‘I miss my relatives, but I haven’t done school, I do not know internet. And I do not have a phone to keep the ties...’ (5/pink/my family, female, 30)

Transnational movements and ties via the ICTs were more frequent in those cases in which caretakers had children left behind. In turn, caretakers that had moved to Kosovo with their relatives, but were unmarried and did not have children said that their travel to Albania was very frequent, almost once a month. Children and adolescents travelled more frequently when they had friends and relatives of their age back in Albania and these trips ensured that they kept friendship ties alive, which, as they emphasise, are very important to them.

Yet, the existence of transnational ties should not be taken for granted. For example, 7/green/Vedat, a 10 year old boy from Tirana, told us that he really missed his family and friends, but he had no idea when he would go to see them and had no access to telephone or other communication technologies, experiencing thus a disruption of his ties with Albania.

Although most of transnational movements are taking place between Albania and Kosovo, some participants pointed to short stays in other countries prior to moving to Kosovo.

## 4. MOVEMENTS ACROSS AND WITHIN BORDERS

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For example, 10/Blue/Messi, a 9 year old boy originally from Fier, said that he and his family had been to Italy, Spain, Germany and Greece prior to moving to Kosovo. Greece featured also in the narratives of caretakers and children. Transnational movements in the region, therefore, consist of complex cross-border mobility phenomena.

### 4.4. Internal movements

Alongside these cross-border movements, some caretakers and children who originated from Albania had experienced internal movements in Albania prior to moving to Kosovo. Many caretakers and children came from Tirana, but there were also others that came from other areas in Albania. Some children who originated from provincial areas in Albania had first moved to Tirana where relatives live, who then helped the children migrate to Kosovo. International movements are, thus, closely linked to internal mobility and migration patterns.

The internal movements within Albania were mostly directed towards central Albania such as Tirana – the capital city, or Durrës – a prominent coastal town. However, some caretakers said that they had travelled widely within Albania. One participant listed 7 different cities, apart from her place of origin (Durrës) in Albania, as places where she had travelled for work within Albania.

Internal movements were also part of these participants' experiences after they relocated in Kosovo. Caretakers and children report that they move to different urban centres in Kosovo to work, although Pristina appears as the favourite city for participants originating from Albania. A minority of the Albanian-origin participants were settled outside Pristina, but travelled to the capital for work on a regular basis. According to the participants' narratives, the capital city of Kosovo was the most suitable since there was more work and possibility to secure higher level of earnings. Young male participants also commented that the capital city had many girls – a statement indicative of youth-related attitudes among street workers.

Participants that originated from other towns in Kosovo were involved in internal movements, too. Indeed, a number of our participants came from Fushë Kosovo – a small urban area in the proximity of Pristina, or small towns and villages close to Peja. Most of participants travelled by bus to Pristina in order to work; their livelihood was organized as inhabiting these two locations on a regular basis. Most often these movements were daily except for Sunday, although some participants in Peja said that they travel only 2–3 times a week to work in the city.

Often one participant or group may travel to more than one city in a short period of time. These movements may take place individually or in groups; sometimes peer groups organize these trips together. Although internal movements – from provincial towns or villages to the main cities – were common in both Pristina and Peja, street populations in Peja were less diverse than those in Pristina, being composed mostly of people who came from the region of Dukagjin.

### **Box 1. Profiles of street workers: caretakers**

In one of the side squares of the main pedestrian area of Pristina a group of children and two women are resting in the shade created by trees and decorative plants of the square. It is a mid-summer's day and one of the little girls is asking her mother for an ice cream. The mother, who we coded as 5/Blue/O, is contemplating of fulfilling her wish. A mother of four, 5/Blue/O tells us that she is 39 years old and is the head of her household that includes her four children aged from 7 to 16 years old, and her adult sister, who has migrated with her from Durrës. She and her husband separated years ago because he used to spend a lot of money in betting shops and would not provide to the children. She and her family spend summers in Kosovo; in winter they move back to Durrës where it is warmer and the weather is more bearable. This seasonal routine had been taking place for five years. 5/Blue/O says that she and her family are happy in Pristina; children are safer when they work, their accommodation is close by. Yet, she belongs to Durrës, where her house is. As an experienced street worker, she knows a versatile attitude to work brings better profit. When she is not begging or supervising the children, she accepts offers from the locals to do small jobs as a cleaner. Not always these jobs are rewarded financially; sometimes the locals offer clothes for the children or other goods useful for the family. Persevering every day she and the children are able to secure the means of survival; the rent alone is €50 in Pristina and this is the first expense to be covered with the earnings of street work. Should any problems arise, 5/Blue/O knows she can rely on her family – both those in Pristina and also her kin and relatives in Albania. As she narrates, they are a phone call away. Indeed, family appears as the ultimate mechanism of support. Her experience with services in Albania is limited; an organization that works with disabled people has helped her and the children, but as she identifies herself as Egyptian she says that Roma organizations do not help people like her. She is still to experience services available in Kosovo, even though she has been living a good part of her life there in the past five years.

Finally, our sample included children who were mobile within one city. These children were included since they were conducting mobilities that were 'atypical' for children. These were primarily children in Peja who lived in the city but inhabited other spaces in this same city in order to work such as the bazaar area, the mosques, the city market, etc. These children appeared as internally and seasonally mobile.

Furthermore, children on the move are not only those who work on the street. While street work increases children's vulnerability, as it will be shown in the coming sections, it also increased their agency and resilience. Indeed, some children may be on the move and may have experienced international migration, but do not work on the street. One of our adult interviewees said that her child had moved with her and disabled husband from Albania, but while she was begging at the city centre in Pristina, the child who was of pre-school age was at home looking after his father.

Internal movements follow the pace of life of the 'mainstream' society, that of city life, weather changes and other events that have an impact on these groups' opportunity to work. Movements, therefore, have strong temporal dimensions which have implications for the features of street work (as analysed below) and vice-versa.



## 5. REGIMES OF STREET WORK

### 5.1. Time dimensions

An important finding of this research is the observation of very diverse temporalities of street work. These temporalities can be organized in four groups, although it should be noted that there is a significant overlap between these groups. Temporalities are closely related to other aspects of street work, as it will be explained in the coming sections. More concretely, the time dimensions make street work:

1 – *seasonal and weather-dependant*. Spring and summer months appear as the most important times of the year for street work. Warm weather is more suitable for street work due to bad living conditions in Kosovo. Many interviewees in Pristina said that live in *barake* (Albanian for hut) in the city park. Some others indicated that they sleep outside, near public buildings on cardboard, especially those who travelled to Pristina to work while being based or hosted by relatives living in other towns or villages.

2 – *varying and patterned during the week*. Working days appear as the optimal time for street work. Friday is 'mosque day', so most of begging is located in the mosque area. Sundays are off; street children doing windscreen cleaning were particularly affected by this pattern, because, according to them, the traffic slows down quite significantly during the weekend. Similarly, this affected children working on the squares as beggars, since these areas of the city were less busy on Sundays. Therefore, mobility patterns in the city condition street work and temporarily immobilize children on the move, although this pattern was less relevant to scavenging and some children mentioned that they work during the weekend, too.

3 – *varying and patterned during the day*. When asked about the preferred time of the day children and adolescents indicated that they mostly like the afternoon and evening. The reason was that it is then they stopped working, went home and re-united with their families. Indeed, in very broad terms, the daily regimes of children appear to be organized in a similar pattern: play in the morning, work 10–3pm, home in the evening.

4 – *conditioned by specific contextual events* – religious and migratory events, in this case. Fieldwork for this project was strongly conditioned by Ramadan happening in June-July this year (2014). This seems to enhance earnings from street work; one caretaker said that she earned 200 Euro in three days during Eid. Similarly, the middle of the summer was also an important time because it is then that the Kosovan diaspora returned home for holidays and this was reported to have an impact on the level of earnings.





*Photo 2. Friday holy day and street work (source: author)*

### 5.2. Key elements of urban street work

Working on the street is a livelihood strategy for children and their families, albeit often at the expense of the children, as they are the main agents of this work – the ones at the forefront of work on the street, the ones generating income and holding the endearing mini slogans talking about hardship and vulnerability.

Patterns of street work in urban areas are highly localised based on an expected interaction with city inhabitants and the intensity of city life. Certain parts of the city 'host' different street professionals. For example, main squares in the city centre are inhabited by beggars and their 'supervisors' that stay in their proximity; cross roads and traffic lights are conducive to car cleaning, therefore, they are mostly inhabited by groups of adolescent boys. Eateries and leisure areas typically host sellers of small items, such as chewing gum, lighters, packs of cigarettes, and so on. Central avenues of the city are mostly 'targeted' by those playing instruments, whereas the commercial and dense residential areas are the main work sites for those scavenging and collecting metallic items.

Hours of working vary among the children and caretakers and they can range from 2–13 hours of work a day. Variation among caretakers depends on whether the whole family works on the street or some childcare is needed. The hours of work are limited for some caretakers, more often in cases in which the family had not migrated with their kin and

had little children who needed care. Changes between children and caretakers are also due to the fact that some caretakers only 'work' as supervisors of their children's work. However, some variation is due to the type of work carried out on the street. Begging seems to vary between 10–3pm; scavenging takes place in 2–3 hours every day, whereas some children selling small items could work up to 13 hours in the commercial areas of the city.

In terms of attitudes towards working on the street, it would be a mistake to assume that all children are victims of oppression and exploitation when working on the street. Some children were explicit in saying that it is their parents that ask them to work, and this is explained to them as the only way out of extreme poverty for their family. Often the reasons may relate to very poor health of a parent, and, more painfully for the children, the health issue of a sibling. In these cases, being of help to their families is important for children's and adolescents' sense of self-worth, particularly for those in late adolescence. Other children reported that they engaged in street work because they would otherwise feel bored. Often working on the street, and particularly the earnings secured through street work, were indeed very empowering for the children. For example, these earnings increased children's autonomy by giving them the opportunity to acquire items such as food and clothes, while their contribution to the family economy increased their sense of self-worth.

<b>Economic activities</b>	<b>Originating from Albania</b>	<b>Originating from Kosovo</b>	<b>Total</b>
Begging	10	3	<b>13</b>
Scavenging	2	1	<b>3</b>
Windscreen cleaning	–	4	<b>4</b>
Selling items	–	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>21</b>

*Table 2.* Street work activities carried out by children and adolescents

Table 2 shows the types of activities carried out on the street by children. However, it should be noted that some children carried more than one activity in different times of the day, week, or across the borders so such groupings should not be seen as clear cut. As the data presented here show, there is some variation in the type of work that children get involved in. Although the sample of this research is not representative of the whole population of street workers, participants originating from Albania are mostly engaged in begging, whereas the type of work that children originating from Kosovo get involved in is more varied. Some participants report that they engage in different street work activities across the borders. For example, they may work scavenging bins and other places for metallic objects in Albania, while in Kosovo they are mostly involved in begging.





*Photo 3. Peer group and street work (source: author)*

It is important to note the implicit and explicit systems of street work. Observations carried out in the cross roads in Pristina where many children and teenagers carry out windscreen cleaning showed that the working instruments of young people engaged in car cleaning are indeed the same – the product, the colour, the same bottles of cleaning liquid – showing cooperation. It could also be speculated that adults who act as patrons of this group of street workers could have provided the children with these working instruments.

Other systems of street work may stretch across various street workers working in the same location in the proximity of one another. For example, one teenage girl mentioned that they once were notified about police taking children to deport them to Albania, and this helped them escape and avoid deportation. These systems operate among peer groups, or kin and relatives networks.

The observation of group dynamics and street life subcultures is a relatively new strand in research that focuses on street children and child labour. According to Davies (2008: 325–26):

‘Children create subcultures that mislead the casual observer and mask underlying social relationships and support systems that exist in antithesis to common misconceptions of the street child. These subcultures are far from “childish” but rather provide essential emotional and social functions. Before we can fully develop appropriate methods for working with street children, we clearly need to better understand these “child cultures”; we must ask how and why they are created, and how they act.’

This research found that in the context of street life and work as a family project, such peer group dynamics are interlinked with family and kin support and also pressure and expectations.

A gender division in terms of street work also exists, although this division is not clear-cut: girls beg, boys clean cars. However, there are some cross-overs. One of the car cleaners at the traffic lights in Pristina (near the Public Library) is a girl who dresses like a boy and works alongside boys. When interviewed she reported that she has only males in her family and has assumed this male gender identity, which is particularly helpful in the context of street work.



*Photo 4. Begging (in) the heart of the city (source: author)*

A general assumption in relation to street work is that this economic activity is the reason why children abandon school. Evidence from this research shows that not all children and adolescents interviewed have abandoned school. In fact, for some of them, street work in the form of begging, cleaning etc. consisted of their summer job; other children mentioned that they work also during semester time, whenever they have school holidays. In addition, as it will be discussed more in detail in the coming chapter on vulnerabilities and resiliencies, some children and adolescents report that they abandoned school because of difficulties they experienced there. The information reported by the children on schooling should be treated with caution. Some children found it hard to find reasons for not attending school and often struggled to articulate their desire to work as superior to their schooling ambitions.

Street work is often a family project (see also Invernizzi 2011). While parents are working in a location in the city, children 'occupied' a spot somewhere else doing another type of street work. Many families work like this: they disperse around the city so as to capture the 'market'. For example, 6/violet/Genta, a ten year old girl from Fushë Kosovo, said that she and her parents travel by bus to Pristina; while her parents go to scavenge, she works as a beggar in the city centre. Types of work of caretakers varied between begging, supervising children, accompanying disabled children, but some parents – mostly women – also mentioned that they had some locals offering them to do some cleaning for them, cleaning houses and cleaning carpets.

### 5.3. Hierarchies among street workers

Hierarchies and divisions among street workers can be grouped as hierarchies on the basis of age, type of street work, poverty and wellbeing, and hierarchies on the basis of length of experience with street work. Another almost implicit division is that between children from Albania and those from Kosovo, and less implicit is the difference that those participants identified as Egyptians made between them and Roma participants, in terms of access to social protection. Looking at hierarchies is important because a theme that cuts across interviews is competition for earnings with other fellow street workers. This became apparent when we were asking them about their earnings. Competition is an important aspect of street work as a survival strategy with high relevance for children's and adolescents' safety when performing work on the streets.

Age hierarchies appear strong in terms of competition in the context of street work, with adolescents being more aggressive and demanding towards the younger children. However, age hierarchies translate also into advice and tips shared among the children, and opinions shared across the different age groups.

Age hierarchies are also apparent within the same family, with younger siblings being in a disadvantageous position. 8/red/Muharrem Tirana, a 12 year old boy from a village in Tirana region, narrates:

'My brother is happy. He bought a motorbike and is well pleased. Me nothing! I feel lonely. I come here and beg. This is my life! I don't like it that I work (on the street). Before I used to collect tins...'

There are, thus, differences between children and adolescents across different contexts that relate to street work. These differences are also evident in terms of their attitudes towards street work. Some of those in mid-to-late adolescence said that they wished they could find a more suitable job. These narratives show that street work activities have age nuances, and that begging and other activities, such as windscreen cleaning, are not considered suitable by the adolescents, particularly by male participants approaching adulthood. These attitudes are indicative of a consciousness on appropriateness of approaches to survival, which appear to have strong age and gender nuances.

Other differences that became apparent during fieldwork were the hierarchies of status among minor street workers. Children who sell are often cleaner and more nicely dressed. The only participant that was involved in selling in the sample was also the one that reported higher level of happiness and better financial situation in his family. These young entrepreneurs may be one step higher in the untold and implicit hierarchy of street children.

**Box 2. Profiles of street workers – children**

8/red/Muharrem Tirana,<sup>2</sup> a 12 year old boy from Albania, is relaxing in the main city square in Pristina with his aunt, neighbour and her child. He is part of a multi-generational family, including his parents, her married sister and her 6 months old daughter, and two brothers. He and his family have tried to move around in Albania before trying for a better life in Kosovo, where they moved in March 2014. As many newcomers, he is not sure what to do when he is unwell. Often he has problems with his eyes; his father has managed to bring some medication from Albania for him. Life in Kosovo looks bleak; he misses his friends and his cousin back in Albania. To counter this strong feeling of longing he travels to Albania as often as he can. Otherwise, his leisure activities are limited; he feels lonely and spends most of the time scavenging and collecting tins and other metallic items. 8/red/Muharrem Tirana is not happy that he has to work; he would have preferred to go to school, but was made to feel he did not belong there by the reaction of teachers and the quitting of school by his friends. However, he shares the heavy responsibility of securing financial resources for the building of the family house in Albania. Most of his earnings go towards this major family need; he keeps 1–2 Euros to buy things to eat or treat his friends with small snacks. He thinks moving to Kosovo was a good thing; this way he can do something to help with the family situation.

Related to their type of work and status in terms of work in the streets, wellbeing and poverty hierarchies became also apparent. Similarly to the findings of Jahsini and Tahsimi (2012), fieldwork for this study showed that children can be divided into richer and poorer and this had implications for the way they understood happiness and their responsibility in terms of street work and contribution to the family. At the same time, some street workers considered the disabled children and caretakers as the most successful since they were often given higher amounts of money to.

Division among street workers were apparent between those coming from Albania and others from Kosovo. Although there is not a direct competition between the Kosovan and Albanian origin street children and adolescents, they do not socialise together. Otherwise, there appears to be a certain common sense in the context of street work which when breached gives rise to conflict between street workers, as it will be shown in section 6. Local Roma in Peja stay close and in big groups and they seem to know each-other while 'sharing the market' among them.

**5.4. Management of the earnings**

The daily earnings varied between €0.5 to €30 with an average of 6 Euro, although children said that there were days in which they did not make any money. There was one exception in terms of earnings of a child who reported that his earnings varied between €20 to €80 a day. He was involved in selling small items and mentioned that people often donate money without taking the items he sells.

It should be noted that for participants that originated from Albania, the level of earnings of street work differed between Albania and Kosovo. Children and adolescents reported that their daily earnings in Albania mounted to 560 Albanian Lek, approximately €4 a day. Considering their earnings in Kosovo, the financial incentive of higher earnings could be an important pull factor for these transnational movements.

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<sup>2</sup> A Roma singer in Tirana



The way the earnings are managed and used depends on the level of earnings - the higher the level of earnings, the more likely the parents' involvement. Higher levels of earnings seem to also increase children's discretion in their use and to increase the possibility for savings. Some children reported that when they earn more than usually they try to hide a small sum so that they can use it for their own needs and dispose it without interference from their parents. For example, they tended to keep a small amount of money from their earnings to spend on food and drinks, to buy items for themselves such as shampoo and shoes, or clothes for those in adolescence, or, in the case of girls, to buy ornaments for their hair. Some of the older children originating from Albania said that the money they keep for themselves is for paying in internet centres which they visit so as to chat with relatives and friends back home.

Otherwise, only a small minority of children said that they keep the earnings for themselves; in these cases, children were supposed to cover their own needs through their earnings. In the majority of the cases, children said that their earnings are used for the needs of the family – to buy food and other necessary items and indicated that savings were not possible. However, in a minority of cases, it appears that children's earnings are transformed into *remittances* to Albania. Some children said that the money are used in Albania, for example, to pay debts back home, or even to build the family house in Tirana.

Different forms of disposing the savings appear to be in place. For example, one participant reported that he has a safe in his house and puts the money he manages to save there. Other participants mentioned that they also use banks for these savings. However, the most organized forms of savings appear common for participants that originate from Kosovo, while participants involved in transnational movements from Albania did not share their experience.

## 6. VULNERABILITIES AND RESILIENCES

### 6.1. Poverty and uncertainty

Children and adolescents that participated in this study lead lives that are characterised by severe material disadvantage and uncertainty. Many of them start the day without knowing that they will get the money to have food. Tiredness and fatigue are part of their daily lives. These negative emotions were countered by socialisation experiences and social support, as shall be explained in the coming sections. A quote by 2/red/noisy (female, 13) captures these dynamics:

‘At 10am I come here to the main square. I don’t have breakfast. I stay alone here, in the same place. I buy my lunch with the money I earn. Sunday is my day off; I go out with my friends. When I sit here on the square I feel lonely, but Sundays are good’.

Uncertainties and vulnerabilities of street work should be considered in the context of wider systemic failures and casualties that children and caretakers experience in the country of origin and locations of destination. Some of these uncertainties in country of origin and destination relate to specific administrative and policy measure in Albania and Kosovo. Previous research has shown that individuals of Roma origin have been subject to discrimination and forced eviction in post-communist Albania (Vullnetari 2012). An aspect that emerged during research for this report is the still uncertain situation of immovable properties and respective rights in Albania, which often gives rise to disputes between former owners of the properties where Roma families have settled. This puts these families in great difficulties giving rise to migration and street work. 8/red/Muhammed Tirana, a 12 boy from a village near Tirana narrates:

‘I come [to Kosovo] to make money because my house was destroyed by the municipality during Sali’s<sup>3</sup> regime. We owned it, but the planned road coincided with the place where our house was, so they demolished it. We were left with a room, a hut!’

Yet, there exists a concept of happiness in the context of street work following transnational migration. Often this is related to the wellbeing of the parents and siblings, ability to work, and presence of friends. 9/red/Mandi, a 9 year old boy originally from Durrës, told us:

‘I mostly collect tins. I rest at home, then I go out to beg... Mum and dad are happy, so are the two sisters. I am happy, too. Sometimes I feel lonely, but then I make friends here, too.’

Many caretakers and children commented on inadequate accommodation in Albania and also upon migration to Kosovo. Some of the problems that caretakers make reference to are homelessness, inadequate accommodation and noise from the neighbours, neighbouring children’s diseases, lack of running water, and the sharing of struggles in

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<sup>3</sup> Refers to Sali Berisha, the former prime minister of Albania, in the period 2005–2013.

the ill-structured flats. Often children and caretakers make reference to extreme space limitation in their accommodation. In some cases families with 4 children shared a flat or living spaces in the city park with friends of the parents and their children who had migrated together from Albania.

In the vast majority of the cases, children and caretakers' personal hygiene was undesirable, leading some children and caretakers complaining that their living conditions did not afford them a suitable personal hygiene. The issue of accommodation was further complicated by the need to be mobile and travel around Kosovo, particularly in the early stages of migration there. Often caretakers and children spoke of temporary accommodation; others mentioned that they have also had to sleep outside so as to be able to afford working in different cities. Accommodation also emerged as one of the main identified needs as it will be discussed in the section on services.

### 6.2. Schooling

Problems with schooling were widespread among our participants. Eleven children out of 21 interviewed had abandoned or had never attended school. In line with research conducted with Roma in Albania (Vullnetari 2012) these children had done less than four years of school in Albania. However, children did not skip or abandon school for begging. Rather, many of them experienced difficulties in schools, which led to their decision to quit.

The responses of the children and adolescents on schooling varied; some of them were unable to comment on their lack of schooling, other children identified the problems that made it very difficult for them to attend classes. Among these issues are poverty and inability of their families to support them financially. For example, one child said that he could not afford the bus ticket to frequent school regularly. Health issues seem to complicate school attendance, in association with lack of proper care from their parents and limited financial means. A 12 year old girl from Peja said that she had to undergo several operations in young age; this made her unable to walk to school and the family was unable to support her financially to go to school by bus.

Children and adolescents mentioned conflicts and violence in schools by the teachers and lack of support in schools – both in terms of school materials and learning support – for them to progress with learning. These issues were mentioned from children and adolescents originating from both Albania and Kosovo; for example, 100/turquoise/ Meda, a 12 year old boy from Fushë Kosovo said that he stopped going to school after year 4 because his peers would pick on him and the teachers would beat him up. Similar narratives characterise the interviews with children who migrated from Albania; 8/red/ Muharrem Tirana (male, 12) from a village near Tirana said that he has done only three years of schooling:

'My friends quit, so I quit, too. The director of the school himself told me to quit. The teacher would beat me up. "I will beat you up if you do not study!", she used to say. Although I used to write so well!'

The issue of schooling is more complicated for children who have moved from Albania. Upon arrival in Kosovo some children and their families have attempted to go to school. However, the registration in schools is not always adequate for their level. Since school experiences in Albania have often been fragmentary, the level of schooling may not



correspond to the number of years they have attended. Therefore, some children found it hard to attend school since they were registered in a certain year, but they were unable to perform at the same level with other children.

Some participants found it hard attending school in Kosovo because they could not follow the teachers due to the Kosovan accent. The experience of these participants with schooling upon migration is not inherent to them; indeed, this is an important finding that concurs with other studies on child migration and the difficulties of insertion in schools in the receiving country (Vathi 2011). School insertion and overall integration is considered as one of the main indicators of children's structural integration in the context of migration, and as the main predictor of their performance in the labour market (Crul and Vermeulen 2003).

### 6.3. (Un)safety related to work on the street

Despite street work being often a family project, as described above, uncertainty and fear are two important emotions experienced by the children and adolescents. Often childhood studies and studies of child migration equate the presence of family and caretakers with better outcomes for the children. Indeed, child migration as part of family migration has been considered as 'safe' migration, but research is increasingly uncovering high (psychological) costs for the children (Vathi and Duci 2014).

Participants of this research – both children and adolescents and caretakers – did not offer accounts of exploitation. However, subtle cues emerged during the interviews and much more explicit signals were apparent during observations conducted on the street. These cues and observations showed that some adults impose street work on children and administer their earnings – be it parents, relatives, or patrons of these children – although children did not speak about these types of relationships. Often parents and other caretakers were impatient with the children while they were working, either towards the toddlers whom they had under their care while begging, or towards other children who were doing street work while parents and caretakers were observing.

Other issues that relate to street work relate to stigma attached to life and work on the street, violence and conflicts between street workers and members of the public, and among street workers themselves. Shame, fear and uncertainty are emotions experienced often by the children and adolescents. Some caretakers reported that they feel ashamed because they are picked on because of their life style; one female caretaker mentioned that others consider her earnings as outcome of sex work. Children and caretakers often cover their face so that they are not recognizable while they are working, pointing to discomfort because of their activities on the street and fear of harassment.

Conflicts with members of the wider public consist of verbal and physical violence. Children report that they feel scared when parents leave to work in other parts of the city; they are often called names and sworn at when inhabiting public spaces in the city centre, and sometimes chased and shoved by adults. Interviews with key community members highlighted some of these issues, but expanded on broader issues such as the way these children are perceived by the members of the public and the general expectations of adults towards children, as the latter are expected to inhabit the 'proper childhood spaces' (James et al 1998; Stephens 1995). An ambulant seller (male, 35) in the main square of Pristina said:

'I think it is the fault of the parents and of the state. Why doesn't the state take these children and put them in education and facilitate their development since the parents cannot provide to them? If the state can find the money for big celebrations and high expenditure it should also provide for these children, because the state will pay its own costs for these children, when it will attempt to get EU membership. Because children who sell on the street forget about school and only want money. Once on the street, the child does not have shame, does not want to know about laws, society, nothing! He is detached from the life of other children'.

Other children of RAE origin made reference to racist terms used by the wider public such as *magjype* – an Albanian slang word meaning gypsy or coloured person. However, some children and caretakers who had moved from Albania were positive about their experience in Pristina, recognising that people were more generous and more compassionate than in Albania. A caretaker narrates:

'When I arrived in Pristina I said "Oh God, where did you take me?!" I liked it a lot. Very kind-hearted people; they give us money, they take our children from their hand, they give us clothes, and sometimes take us to do some work for their in their homes, either cleaning or washing carpets...' (5/Blue/O, female, 39)

The reasons for conflicts among street worker are varied. One of the most important sources of such conflicts is the competition in terms of street work and earnings. Some children have been attacked by others working on the street who have attempted to take from them materials that they were selling. In other cases, children have been attacked by others working on the street because of their success in begging; for example, one participant said that when other children are not given any money, this may become a cause of violence towards them. Conflict among children and teenagers on the streets was identified as one of the main problems that some caretakers face in the role of mediators of such conflicts.

Different types of street work involve different types of risks and hazards for the children and teenagers. Risks and vulnerabilities of car cleanings are the obvious danger of getting run over. Actual accidents near the traffic lights were reported by both children and key community members; one child reported that she had been hit by cars five times and some of these have been nearly fatal.



Photo 5. Cross-roads of street work (source: author)

Experiences with the police were mixed, although many participants originating from Albania said that for as long as they had been in Kosovo they had not had problems with the police. However, incidents were not missing. One young participant commented that there had been cases when police had taken beggars and deported them to Albania. Indeed, fear of being caught by the police and sent to the police station were widespread among children and caretakers, both those who had moved from Albania and others who were from Kosovo who they travelled to Pristina for work. One caretaker from Albania narrates:

‘I am anxious to collect some money, but there isn’t much. The children want yogurt, want sugar. But they (police) catch us and take us to Kukës.<sup>4</sup> They say begging is not allowed’ (5/pink/my family, female, 30)

Children were also very vocal on their fear of police. Answering the question ‘What are those things you mostly worry about for yourself, your family, or your friends?’, 2/red/noisy (female, 13) answered:

‘I worry about my mother and my brothers when they go away, to collect tins... I am so scared that police may catch them!’

## 6.4. Health

Health issues are an important theme emerging from our participants’ narratives. Health appears as a multifaceted aspect of children’s and adolescents’ and their families’ lives. Health problems of their parents are an important push factor for children to engage in street work. Indeed, the vast majority of children and adolescents interviewed said that their parents suffered from various diseases that made them unable to work. This was particularly emphasised by the participants originating from Albania. Often, health issues are part of the slogans, which consist of instruments of street work through which children and parents communicate with the wider public. On the other hand, street work can be the cause of health issues, and certainly of the inability of children and caretakers to access the health system.

It should be emphasised that health issues are an actuality for most of the participants, but there is an important instrumental element in the way health issues are defined and put in display. An important observation is that the disability of the children is often exploited by the parents. In different parts of the city centre in Pristina children were left in the middle of the street in the main pedestrian area on a wheel chair to make people give donations while the child begs. Children are accompanied by the parents who stay in the vicinity of the children to oversee the donations.

Family situation, unsuitable accommodation, severe material disadvantage, diseases, and on the other hand, work on the street in a very young age appear to have an impact on children’s cognitive development - an aspect that calls for immediate action. Based on observations and interviews with the children, it appears that certain aspects of cognitive development were very highly developed: for example, being mobile in the city and moving translocally; moving from one town/village to a city while planning work; manipulating in order to realise or maximise the earnings from begging; organizing the

<sup>4</sup> Kukës is a city in the north east of Albania where the border point between Albania and Kosovo is.

outcomes of street work according to a system; recognizing that street work was the only way to have the perks of new clothes, mini accessories for the hair for the girls, leisure money for the teenagers, and so on.



*Photo 6. Outcomes of scavenging (source: author)*

However, some children were severely delayed in other aspects of cognitive development. Some children could not express themselves to say their age, their speech was fragmented, and eye contact was very limited. Many children had a weak sense of time and continuity, and found it difficult to comment on their parents' age and their age. Those children originating from Albania had difficulties to comment on the time they arrived in Pristina, the times they went back to Albania, the frequency of their visits back and forth, although many of them had many years in Kosovo. However, an important argument is children's awareness of informality and precarity of their daily lives and work on the street which made many of them develop a concept of secrecy and astuteness, as explained below.

### 6.5. Secrecy, astuteness and skills

Critical childhood studies have contested the idea of childhood as characterised by innocence, which in itself, serves to the purpose of othering children and denying their agency and resilience (Valentine 1996). Interviews with children and adolescents in this research showed that they had developed different resilience strategies, among others, being secretive, astute and developing work and survival skills.

For example, children have adopted the 'orphan' mantra when working on the street, which was evident during the observations of the slogans involved in begging and the interviews conducted with some of the children. Another important observation is that children and caretakers do not comment on parents and siblings when asked 'what do they do?'. Usually, during the interview when asked other questions it resulted that they beg (or do other street work), too. Another example of street work strategies are the forms of begging which seem to differ among participants and across different situations of street work. Some strategies are based on trying to endear people passing by, other strategies consist of clinging and trying to extract money from people in eateries in the



area. These strategies show the capacity of being resilient in very disadvantageous life and work circumstances.

As a result of this awareness on secrecy and the precarity of their lives, some forms of vulnerability and exploitation are very difficult to study. Research for this project did not generate findings on trafficking and sexual exploitation. Work done in Kosovo by Terre des Hommes has not found many such cases, therefore not much is known (Avdiu 2014). Participants were also silent about substance abuse; the only mentioning of drug use among street children was recorded during interviews with key community members who reported that they had observed instances of drug use (but not of drug selling) and that police had been involved in cases of overdose among street workers. However, according to key community members, there are no specialised services for narcotic children.

Street observations revealed that work and life on the street require special skills; yet, most of our participants were unable to recognise or articulate any skills gained or any personal improvement as a result of migration, internal mobility and street work. Nonetheless, the response from both groups shows that, while they are non-observant of or unable to articulate the newly-acquired skills and abilities, in the course of the interview children and adolescents often said that they had 'learnt' to beg through their parents, kin and relatives, or friends.

Some participants were either ashamed of their work on the street or very dissatisfied. Indeed, one participant from Peja was explicit in highlighting her dissatisfaction with her style of living. As she put it, it is much worse being mobile and travelling to Peja for street work, since it would be better that she stayed at home and helped her mother and play with her friends (50/red/Meda, female, 12).

Those who made reference to skills acquired referred mostly to skills that concern mobility and communication. Some of them said that they are more sociable and have acquired travel skills. One of the caretakers for example, mentioned that she is more able to get orientated in urban areas and travel alone. Whereas one of the children reported that during this time in Kosovo he learned how to ride a bicycle. In turn, 9/Blue/Messi (male, 9) said that he has learned 'to buy things, to buy bread, Coca-Cola... and to chat with people'.

Nonetheless, as previous research has also pointed out (Goździak 2013), childhood scholars and specialists should avoid dichotomous thinking – oscillating between vulnerability and resilience, angels and devils (Valentine 1996). Interviews with children and adolescents showed that informality and responsibilities seem to be too much too soon since many children appeared to be confused during the time of the interview so as to give the 'right' answer to questions on their family. Among the children interviewed, uncertainty, lack of concentration and apprehension were common for the majority of them. This observation was more common for children who reported that they felt responsible for their ill-health parents, or those who felt under pressure to generate an income from their work.

## 6.6. Socialisation and leisure

Leisure and socialisation in the context of street work and child labour is an unexplored topic. In general, migration studies have ignored leisure (Juniu 2000), but this is particularly the case of studies of children who migrate and engage in street work. The narratives of participants of this study show that socialisation and leisure activities are

## 6. VULNERABILITIES AND RESILIENCES

integral part of their lives, although restrictions and limitation due to their disadvantaged material status were evident. For example, often children struggled with finding the name of a celebrity. Local celebrities in Albania and Kosovo were often a popular choice, such as Mandi, Noisy, etc.

Evenings appear as times for street workers to 'consume' leisure time, and also passively participate in the leisure activities of the non-disadvantaged locals who inhabit the leisure venues in the city centre. As 7/green/Vedat (male, 10) told us:

'I am happy when I play football, and when I make money. I go to "Visi" organization, and collect metallic items in bins... I prefer the evening because I play, after I finish work'.

This speaks about a regime in their daily routine of work, while the evening was leisure time. Younger children also mentioned that play and socialisation was the first thing they did before starting to work. For example, 10/Blue/Messi, a nine year old boy from Fier, said that the morning is his favourite time of the day since he spends it playing football with his friends in the neighbourhood.

An interesting finding is that some parents picked as favourite time of the day the same time when they were working or the time when they were able to make more money. This shows different priorities, needs and desires of children compared to adult caretakers.

Nonetheless, socialisation should not been seen separately from street work and child labour. Often young children play in the proximity of their parents or older siblings as they work – beg or play instruments (Photo 7). Older children also socialise while they are on the street and while working, and caretakers often exchange with others working in the same area.

It was also interesting to note that some children and adolescents have friends with the locals – children from Pristina – and that they socialised when they were not working. Indeed, a part of the earnings was used for leisure; to go out with friends, to buy crisps, etc. A 12 year old girl in Peja said that she and her friends go out and try to treat each other, particularly their best friends, whenever one of them has money (50/red/Meda).



*Photo 7. Play in the context of street work: Roma girls playing in Peja city park (source: author)*



## 6.7. Social support

Families and community people that we interviewed today said that many people – a high number from the RAE communities in Albania – have migrated to Kosovo, which meant that many of them had their relatives in Kosovo. Support networks appeared as paramount for some of them, but especially for the single-parent families. One participant said:

‘It is very important to speak with your family and friends. I am particularly in touch with my family; if you do not have the support of your family it is very difficult here, and you would want to go back to Albania straight away’ (5/blue/O, female, 39).

An important observation is that groups of street workers encompass various types of relations – couples and children mixed with kin, friends and acquaintances made in the temporary accommodation. Indeed, neighbours appear as an important source of social support and crucial for networking. Some adults and children get to know each other in the work place. These groups are often multi-generational, including grandparents, parents and children and often married siblings and their children.

One important finding of this report was that there is a lot of networking happening on the streets and squares. The networking was in terms of accessing organizations; for example, 12/pink/Frioni, a 12 year old from Peja told us that she learned about ‘Elizabeta’ Organization through a friend. An important aspect of networking was the organizing of migration from Albania and/or in finding ‘work’ and accommodation in Kosovo and sorting out some health needs. Nonetheless, organizations were mostly seen in terms of immediate help caretakers and children were hoping to receive from them.



## 7. SERVICES

### 7.1. Awareness of stakeholders and the functioning of services

The interviews with stakeholders are the main source of information for this part of the report. One of the main findings is that the understanding of the concept 'children on the move' varied among stakeholders, and often it was nuanced according to the type of activity their organization was involved in in terms of children's issues. In general, there was an assumption that children on the move are those that do not have a family or lack parental care. As the findings of this report show, many children on the move that get involved in street work have migrated and work with their families.

It is also important to emphasise that stakeholders were aware of specific categories of children on the move; for example, street children, asylum seekers, etc. but showed insufficient consideration of the significant overlap between such categories. When overlap was considered, this was seen from the disadvantage point of view; for example, when asked what they understand with the term 'children on the move' a stakeholder said:

'The term "children on the move" mostly defines children that are in a situation of displacement. This displacement is for purposes of profit, trafficking, begging or any other kind of exploitation, which is not in the interests of, or in line with, the wellbeing of the child. Under this term we cannot list categories, but we can list forms of exploitation. The types of exploitation are the ones listed above'.

There is, thus, a difference in the way that migration studies define children on the move – primarily referring to mobility and migration experiences, with their families or alone, within or across state borders – and the way that children on the move are defined by service providers, which focuses on the condition of disadvantage and exploitation. Theoretically, such approach is compatible with traditional understanding of childhood as a stage of life to be protected, in time that critical studies of childhood try to shed light on children's agency and resilience (Jenks 2005). While conditions of exploitation and vulnerability may indeed be part of the experience of children on the move, an exclusive focus on these may obscure full understanding of children's experiences and aspirations and fail to fully inform policy-making.

An information that came to light during desk research was that, unlike Albania, Kosovo does not have a law that protects children. There are a few laws that regulate family and services for the family, such as the Law on Family and the Law on Social and Family Services, but no law on children specifically except for the Juvenile Justice Code. This structure of the legal framework is itself telling of the fact that children are subsumed under the 'family' umbrella term, which inevitably makes street children irrelevant to the legislation that predicts protection of children, while criminalising them under other laws.

Some of the main projects and programmes in the field of children services that were ongoing in different organizations related to trafficking, asylum seeking children, gender violence, children that were involved in crime, with a major strand concerning children

on the move being repatriated and the reintegration of Kosovan families and children returning from West European countries.

One important observation, which is in line with research and writings on children from an international perspective (Bronstein and Montgomery 2011; Doná and Veale 2011; Goździak 2013) is the hierarchy between different categories of children on the move. For example, as stakeholders also pointed out, the status of asylum seekers is much better regulated by law, and services predicted for these children appear to take a holistic approach towards them, predicting the assignment of a legal representative, health service, language courses, education at primary and secondary level, and different social activities to ensure the integration of these children/individuals. Unaccompanied and displaced minors appear as 'categories' that are well-provided by the law.

It appears that the Centre for Social Work (CSW) is the main institution in Kosovo that works on children issues. The main services it provides are social assistance to children and families in need and psychological counselling. CSW serves as a central institution, which also engages and coordinates the work of other institutions according to the needs of children and families in every specific case. Nonetheless, interviews with stakeholders identified many issues that relate to the availability, functioning and funding of the policy framework and services for children and youth. Some of the issues identified are:

- lack of statistics on children on the move,
- fragmentation of the system in terms of children services,
- lack of holistic approach and lack of emphasis on prevention,
- poor implementation of the laws by different institutions,
- absence of children in the government's priority for policies,
- limited budget allocated to children's issues and overall shortage of resources.

These issues were observed at a policy-making level, but they were also evident in the way services were performed; for example, stakeholders report that during deportation very little attention was paid to the immediate needs of the deported individuals, which included children. Only recently had some budget been allocated to the provision of food during the time they spend in the police station. In general, as the stakeholders indicate, services are offered only for cases in critical conditions, making the approach to service provision compatible with the definition of children on the move, as analysed above, which refers primarily to exploitation.

Another aspect that emerged as an administrative barrier to optimal services for children on the move is children's registration. Often children that get involved in street work are not registered, or they may hide their identity or carry forged documents. The issue of registration of RAE children is also documented in research with these communities in Albania (Vullnetari 2012).

According to stakeholder interviews, the limited services available for children and for those on the move are *de jure* equally predicted for children of any nationality (for example, as predicted in the Law for Social and Family Services). However, anecdotal evidence and the interviews with children and caretakers did show that in some cases service providers had made differentiation based on nationality and had excluded children and caretakers of Albanian origin from their services.

Knowledge on regional agreements that may affect children on the move among stakeholders was either lacking, or it was reported to be linked with trafficking. In general,

there was a lack of knowledge on the practice of institutions in Kosovo, on administrative and practical barriers, on international and bilateral agreements, and the way they relate to children on the move. Additionally, most of the interviewees misinterpreted the question on inclusivity of the system.

Among stakeholders there were cases in which strong views on prevention of transnational migration of street children to Kosovo were expressed. For example, stakeholders suggested that the public should not give these children money so as to discourage their migration to Kosovo. There were also suggestions to enforce border controls to prevent the return of the deported children and families to Kosovo.

## **7.2. Access to services and identified needs**

Access to services was affected by participants' attitude towards approaching services, their knowledge on and the actual availability of services, and as mentioned above, the attitude of the service providers. Interviews with children and adolescents showed that most of the participants know police as the main reference point when they encounter any issues. They have limited knowledge about social centres and charities, and usually see them as places where to receive immediate material help.

The main needs identified by participants originating from Albania consist of health and medication, schooling for the children, housing and accessing services in Kosovo. Health was a predominant concern of caretakers and children. Caretakers identified personal health needs, and similar needs of their children and other relatives they were looking after. Despite many children having quit school, education of their children was an important concern for parents who had migrated from Albania. Housing was one of the most important needs referred to by the caretakers, but also the needs that felt most difficult to be fulfilled in Kosovo. One of the participants mentioned help with fixing the problems of the house where she lived as her most acute need. Accessing social services and benefits and allowances in Kosovo was also an acute need, particularly for those participants who had disabilities. One caretaker said:

'The Red Cross near the municipality did not give me medicines. "You are not from here", they told me. "Go to Albania to take medication!"' (2/red/f; male, 35)

Although participants reported that they had several needs, those originating from Albania were sceptical towards service organizations, mostly because of mistrust and fear of being reported to the police. Most of the participants originating from Albania mentioned that they had had contact with organizations and services, but in the majority of cases, these experiences had taken place in Albania. One of the caretakers said:

'Well, we are not in Albania to ask for social services' help. We are in a foreign country! For example, I cannot ask for support on housing' (5/blue/O, female, 39)

Often experience with assistance from organizations in Albania had taken place at a local level. Some children mentioned that some organizations gave them food – some organizations in Tirana, when they were doing street work in the Blloku area.<sup>5</sup> Some children, nonetheless, indicated that they would be happier if they were offered toys and shoes instead of money, which may relate to the fact that money is usually administered

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<sup>5</sup> A high-profile commercial area in the city centre in Tirana.

by their parents. Other children report that they and their families have been assisted by organizations or their branches that operated in their city; for example the family of 5/yellow/sportsman, a 14 year old boy from Fier, said that his family had had assistance from a centre who worked with children with disabilities, and with kindergartens that offered services for Roma children in Fier.

There were also narratives that showed that certain aspects of the system of protection and of the activity of the charity sector excluded certain members of these mobile communities, pointing to differences between Roma, Egyptians and Ashkali individuals and their access to services. Some participants said that they were Egyptians and, unlike Roma, they were not supported by the state, suggesting that Roma communities are more visible for policy-makers.

Gender and marital status also appeared as factors that put participants in a disadvantageous position in terms of accessing social services in Albania. In the following case, access to social protection system in country of origin or, indeed, lack of access, consisted of the reason to migrate to Kosovo. A single woman who was interviewed as a caretaker explained that the main reason for her migration to Kosovo was that the social assistance system did not protect her, as it is usually the case with single women in Albania. According to her story, she had tried to ask for help at the city council in Pogradec in Albania but had been told that, as a single woman without children, she is not entitled to social protection. In her attempts to access the system, this participant had approached the city council, Roma organizations, Ombudsman, but had found no solution. Indeed, her narrative carries with it an important theme that cuts across adult participants' narratives on interactions with services: immediate needs met with future promises. This phrase represents what caretakers' expectations from the system, and their actual experiences with it, are.

The typical assistance that caretakers and children and adolescents had received from the services and charities was a small amount of money, food and sometimes medication. Organizations mentioned to have offered support such were FBSH-DN (Fëmijet e Botës dhe të Shqipërisë-Të drejtat e Njeriut [Children of the World and of Albania-Human Rights]), and Organization for Roma. Less common were experiences with organizations that offered services. Organization 'Elisabeta' in Kosovo was mentioned by a participant originating from Kosovo for offering classes in English and Maths to children. A key community member referred to a school frequented by street children – 'Përparimi' School funded by HandiKOS (<http://www.handi-kos.org/>) – which offered education while supporting the pupils by offering dental and psychological services.

In general, knowledge on social services in Kosovo was limited for participants originating from Albania. Participants either lacked information or they were unable to access it because of lack of suitably compiled information or inability to read. Knowledge of Albanian is limited; both caretakers and children and adolescents reported that they know to speak and read Albanian, but observations showed that they read very little.

Many participants said they did not access the medical services in Kosovo. One of them said that although he had problems with the eyes, he asked for information, but he could not find the solution for his problems in Kosovo and then decided to take the medication from Albania. Others reported that they mostly buy medication in pharmacies. Those participants originating from Albania who had tried to access the health system in Kosovo reported that they had positive experience and that the reception from medical staff had



been positive. However, many of them said that they cannot afford having medication as often as it is needed, so they skipped buying medication in many cases.

Nonetheless, anecdotal evidence showed that many doctors and nurses do not consider the non-Kosovan children as part of their mandate and do not perform services on them. Kosovo has not signed the UNCRC because it is not a country recognized by the UN. However, many legal documents do show that some kind of alignment with UNCRC is evident in the framing of issues and provisions (Avdiu 2014), as it became apparent during the stakeholders' interviews. As provided by the UNCRC every child is entitled to health care, regardless of her nationality; therefore, such an approach among medical professionals calls for fundamental changes in the health policy in Kosovo.

Accessing the health system in Peja, according to our participants, was difficult since, as one caretaker reported, they were expected to pay 2,000 Albanian Lek – approximately 15 Euro, while the actual doctor visit was free. This was considered a big barrier from the side of the participants. It is not clear from participants' narratives whether this fee they are expected to pay is a formal or an informal request.

As far as the participants originating from Kosovo are concerned, some families are recipient of micro-assistance from Terre des Hommes and other organizations. This has changed the conditions of the families considerably. However, such aid comes with the condition that families should not send children to work, but this is not always respected by the families. In turn, some children and adolescents reported that they received some assistance from the Centre for Social Work; less experience was reported with charities, although examples were not missing (e.g. Organization 'Papadinka').

It should be noted that, as mentioned above, CSW is a central organization and Kosovo does not have the same social services system in place with Albania. In Albania children's issues are dealt with by Child Protection Unit (CPU) and Child Protection Worker (CPW). The CPUs were created in 2005; currently there are 173 units operating in every municipality and communes around Albania (Jones and Stafa 2010). Decentralising the social service system in Kosovo may be a step to take in Kosovo, together with other potential changes as discussed in the coming section.



## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1. Legal framework and policy-making

Children on the move challenge not only the theoretical assumption of fixity of childhood, but also the nationally-contained systems of services and social protection – social services in general and services for children in particular. Therefore, transnational cooperation could focus on the harmonization of legislation on child protection in South-Eastern Europe.

Previous research and interviews with stakeholders showed that policy-making on children on the move is characterised by a fragmented response of institutions towards issues that regard children. While the legal framework does make reference to children through protection of the family, advocacy initiatives could focus on lobbying for children issues to become more central in the government's agenda in Albania and Kosovo.

The findings of this research showed that there was inconsistency in the way policy makers view different categories of children on the move as included in the definition of 'children on the move' in the Mario Project. Training programmes for policy-making and service-level officials in Kosovo on children on the move could introduce them to the complexity of this group and their diverse needs. This would enable the social workers and specialists to consider the complexity and the multi-layered situation of children on the move, especially in the case of children and families on the move in the conditions of street work.

In light of the evidence that the Centre for Social Services does not cover children from Albania because they contend that they do not have a mandate for these children, training of policy makers on inclusive systems and encouraging them to perform their services taking an inclusive approach towards children on the move in Kosovo may improve the outcomes of these services for children and caretakers.

As highlighted by many policy-makers and service providers, the fragmentary approach to children issues highlighted two main aspects of social work with children which may require some emphasis:

- The principle of cooperation between different service providers working with children should be emphasised as much as possible due to the complexity of their situation.
- Putting the best interest of the child first and respect for universal human rights among child specialists in the region is crucial for the protection of these children who seem to have been overlooked in the policies that protect children.

Multi-disciplinary team working is part of the protocol for CPUs in Albania (Jones and Stafa 2010), but because of a fragmentary system and a patchy implementation of measures in place, this principle is not always respected. The protocol may serve as a model for a similar one in Kosovo, which can be extended to include more explicit clauses on children on the move. As the findings of this report show, although outright exploitation

and abuse towards children may still be prominent in Albania and Kosovo, there are many more issues to be dealt with.

At service level, details of the response of the protection system should be specified. This will require that issues that relate to the availability, functioning and funding of the policy framework and services for children and youth are addressed first. All upcoming changes in the legislation and policy framework must take a child-centred and holistic approach to children's issues and put emphasis on prevention. Such changes should reflect on the government's priority for policies on children and on the budget allocated to children's issues.

### 8.2. Services and children's needs

Street work is an outcome of severe lack of opportunities in the labour market and of acute needs of the families and children to survive. The conditions and outcomes of street work differ widely across different participants. As analysed in section 5. 'Regimes of street work', street work is highly correlated with poverty, negative health outcomes, and schooling, while there exist hierarchies among street workers which have implications for their economic activities on the street and wellbeing.

Outreach work and access of caretakers and children on the move to services could be enhanced by the preparation of comprehensive information that goes beyond leaflets and integrates information on all potential child protection services and other social services in the region. So far, different leaflets contain information on different services; for example, a leaflet of Terre des Hommes only contains information on the social centres, but not on other organizations and services. An integrated system of information of child protection in the country and region would be helpful.

One of the main findings of this research is that most of the children see police as the place to go when they have problems, whilst social centres are mostly seen as places to receive help with other things, such as assistance in clothes, food, etc. More should be done to promote the preventive and safeguarding aspects of child protection system in general and NGO's in particular.

The findings also suggest that governmental and inter-governmental agreements should not focus only on trafficking cases when child protection is concerned. For example, the Standard Operating Procedures for Identification and Referral of Potential/Victims of Trafficking (SOP) coordinated by the Ministry of Interior in Albania looks at child protection situations when a case is identified in Albania, abroad or at the border. Nonetheless, the findings presented in this report show two conflicting scenarios; firstly, children who experience mobility and migration on a seasonal and regular basis see work as valuable for the realisation of their desires. At the same time, this report has uncovered issues with access to social protection systems and other vulnerabilities. Therefore, such provisions should be extended to all categories of children on the move beyond the trafficked children.

Age appeared as an important factor that affected our participants' needs; therefore, organizations could consider preparing age appropriate programmes. The findings of this report show that there is a difference between the needs identified from young children and those from adolescents. Young age children often spoke about toys, or pointed to major issues in the family, possibly echoing discussions at home. Adolescents

interviewed pronounced having a job as their main need. Organizations working with children may want to consider activities with children that affect and enhance their cognitive development. Countering the negative impact of poverty and street work at an early age may help these children realise their potential and create skills that would enable them fare better in life.

An important recommendation deriving from this research is the need to raise awareness and build capacity in Albania and Kosovo in terms of assisting children that come from a disadvantaged background to prolong their stay in education, by making schools more inclusive and child friendly. The educational system in Albania could focus on increasing support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and RAE children to reduce the number of drop outs. Findings show that the negative schooling experience – including physical and verbal violence from teachers – of children of RAE background led many of them to quit school.

Upon relocation to Kosovo, some children reported that they have tried to go to school in Kosovo upon migration from Albania but had difficulties accessing education. Schools and education system in Kosovo may consider making provisions for non-native children.

Health and accommodation were two other important needs identified by caretakers and children. Institutions and organizations working with children and families should consider all potential alternatives to ease these children's and families' access to health services and more suitable accommodation.

However, the problems identified by the caretakers and children who migrated from Albania to Kosovo may not specifically relate to the way migrants are treated by the current legislation in Kosovo, but to general structural issues in Kosovo. According to UNDP (2012: 5):

'Kosovo's budget-neutral Law on Family and Social Assistance is also a key driver of dependency cycles limiting the impact of private sector growth on poverty and inequity. Social assistance levels have remained static in recent years despite rising GDP, and the current system ejects poor families once their youngest child reaches five if there are no other dependants in the household. Kosovo has not yet considered the long-term value of linking a more targeted social welfare programme to school attendance, job-seeker, catch-up or vocational schemes. The potential for effective revenue redistribution and a deeper well of human capability is therefore limited, both now and for the future.'

The above quote contains several messages for policy makers and specialists of social services and child specialists in Kosovo and other countries in the region. Some organizations in Albania are offering to successful Roma the opportunity to develop their business ideas. However, problems of Roma integration do not lie with the successful Roma. While educational and investment initiatives, such as the Roma Education Fund, or the Open Society Foundation programme for Roma CSOs, may assist a small number of RAE-origin individuals, it is likely that many RAE children who quit school and engage in street work will not succeed to make it to higher education. Vocational and apprentice programs may be successful for children from disadvantaged background in Albania and those of migration origin in Kosovo. In particular, such schemes could help the RAE-origin children and youth to counter the effects of material disadvantage and enable them to experience occupational and social mobility.

### 8.3. Researching and regulating migration

The findings of this report show that transnational movements between Albania and Kosovo that give rise to street work consist of persisting phenomena in the region. Migration patterns are influenced by poverty and poor living conditions in Albania and have strong time dimensions. Seasonality is an important aspect of these movements, while street work regimes are based on weekly and daily routines that impact the livelihoods of caretakers and children. Movements across borders that give rise to street work mostly consist of family migration, with kin and relatives being an important part of such movements. Many caretakers and children involved in such movements aspire settlement in Kosovo due to its better economic prospects when compared to Albania. While migration and street work are important aspects of caretakers and children's survival strategies, both migration and street work appear as multifaceted and variable phenomena.

Evidence from this research has shed light on some of the movements in the region; however, more research is needed on migration and mobilities within the Western Balkans. This region has been typically seen as a source of out-migration towards the North Western countries, but very little is known about the flows within the region. As previous research has shown (Vathi 2014) and as it is evident in this report, there are several movements taking place in the region and related vulnerabilities.

Data also show that the thinking of migration and childhood scholars and service providers working in the field of children on the move should go beyond the dichotomous understanding of childhood and child migration. Usually, there is a clear-cut division between accompanied and unaccompanied minors, and regular and irregular migrants. Most of our participants were accompanied, but this did not ensure that their development and welfare was enhanced by the presence of parents or caretakers.

International legislation and national legislation in Albania (Albanian Parliament, 2010) contain a right to return to the country of origin, while immigration is not an unconditional right protected by law. Bilateral agreements between countries where these children migrate, and between Albania and Kosovo, may address the situation of children on the move more adequately.

The way movements between Albania and Kosovo are currently regulated represent particular features due to Kosovo's *sui generis* status and the bilateral agreements that already exist between Albania and Kosovo in terms of free movements. In light of the recent commitment of governments to protect the rights of Albanians outside the borders, a child-focused agenda could be proposed to both Albania's and Kosovo's governments.

Indeed, the problems reported by the caretakers and children that engage in street work call for developments of Kosovo's immigration policy and law. The legal framework currently has no clear provisions on this; therefore, discussion on immigration may be timely and they should go beyond repatriation and may focus on services for migration, regularisation, child migration provisions and so on.

Therefore, policy makers working in the field of children on the move may want to capitalize on recent developments in the field of cooperation between Albania and Kosovo. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, the governments of Albania and Kosovo have committed to enhance such freedoms, while in a press declaration in early 2014, Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama said:



‘The new cooperation path that we are inaugurating today should go beyond our mandates. [...]. *A special importance will be given to the rights of the Albanian people outside our official borders.*’<sup>6</sup> (Top Channel 2014)

Despite this political rhetoric, the findings of this report show that movements across borders are characterised by precarity and that there exist inconsistencies in terms of implementation of measures in place; for example, deportation and repatriation procedures were characterised by lack of consideration of basic needs of deportees, including children. It is therefore timely to advocate for better policies in place that regulate movements across the borders in the region that show consideration to the rights and vulnerabilities of children and families on the move.

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<sup>6</sup> Italics added.

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JOINT ACTION TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM EXPLOITATION IN EUROPE